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SUBJECT: SOUTHERN AFRICA: ITALIAN GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE ON SOUTH
AFRICAN POLICY

REF: ROME 0322

1. DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION ON RHODESIA (REFTEL),
FONMIN COUNSELLOR RACHELE (SUB-SAHARAN POLITICAL AFFAIRS)
WENT ON TO DISCUSS SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES AND PROBLEMS.
ALTHOUGH MUCH OF HIS ASSESSMENT IS NOT NEW, WE PASS IT ON
AS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST TO ADDRESSEES SINCE IT PROBABLY
REPRESENTS AS MUCH A CONCERTED VIEW ON SOUTH AFRICA AS
EXISTS IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT.

2. ACCORDING TO RACHELE, SOUTH AFRICA'S SOUTHERN-BASTION
CONCEPT WAS VIABLE ONLY SO LONG AS ITS NORTHERN BUFFER-STRIP--
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MOZAMBIQUE, RHODESIA, BOTSWANA, ANGOLA AND NAMIBIA (SOUTHWEST)

AFRICA) --NQ PROVIDED A MEASURE OF INSULATION AND PROTECTION FROM MILITANT BLACK NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS. CONSEQUENTLY, THE CPW POLITICO-STRATEGIC SITUATION CREATED BY REVERSAL OF PORTUGUESE COLONIAL POLICY REQUIRED A FUNDAMENTAL EXAMINATION OF FUTURE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES VIS-A-VIS ITS NEIGHBORS.

3. THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE WAS WHETHER TO STAND FAST IN SUPPORT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S HITHERTO "STRATEGIC BORDER", THE NORTHERN AND EASTERN PERIMETERS OF RHODESIA, OR WHETHER TO RE-GROUP AROUND POLICIES DESIGNED TO PROTECT SOUTH AFRICA'S OWN POLITICAL BORDERS. THE DECISION DICTATED ITSELF. THE PROSPECT OF A MILITANT, BLACK, INDEPENDENT STATE IN MOZAMBIQUE, COMPLETELY OUTFLANKING RHODESIA AND IMMEDIATELY CONTIGUOUS TO THE TRANSVAAL, REQUIRED FALLING BACK FROM THE RHODESIAN SALIENT.

4. THE MORE DIFFICULT QUESTION, TO WHICH RACHELE BELIEVES THE SAG STILL HAS INCOMPLETE ANSWERS, WAS THE FORMULATION OF A POLITICAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE THAT THE SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENTS IN RHODESIA, MOZAMBIQUE, AND ANGOLA WOULD BE MODERATE IN OUTLOOK, OR AT LEAST NOT TOTALLY HOSTILE TO SOUTH AFRICA. ONLY THE BROAD AND INCOMPLETE OUTLINES OF THAT POLICY ARE EMERGING. PRIME MINISTER VORSTER IS WORKING TO MOVE IAN SMITH TOWARD A POLITICAL BREAKTHROUGH WHICH WOULD GRADUALLY EVOLVE A MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY IN RHODESIA. SIMILARLY VORSTER IS ATTEMPTING TO SHOW A SYMPATHETIC ATTITUDE TOWARD POLITICAL EVOLUTION IN MOZAMBIQUE AND ANGOLA. IN REGARD TO ALL THREE AREAS, THE SAG IS KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH ZAMBIA'S KAUNDA, AMONG OTHER THINGS IN THE HOPE THAT HE WILL HELP MODERATE SOUTH AFRICA'S RACIST IMAGE IN NATIONAL AFRICAN EYES.

5. GIVEN THE VARIABLES IN THE PROBLEM, RACHELE BELIEVES IT IS POINTLESS NOW TO SPECULATE ON WHETHER THE SAG'S EVOLVING LONG-TERM SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLICY WILL SUCCEED. HE ALSO BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT CARRYING OUT THAT POLICY WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT. THE RHODESIAN ANSWER WAS RELATIVELY EASY. SOUTH AFRICA HAD FEW INTERESTS IN RHODESIA, AND FEWER STILL ONCE EVENTS IN LISBON AND MOZAMBIQUE DIMINISHED RHODESIA'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE.

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6. ON THE OTHER HAND, SOUTH AFRICA'S INVESTMENT --ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL--IN NAMIBIA IS SIGNIFICANT. INEVITABLY AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES ON THE NAMIBIA ISSUE WILL BEGIN TO TELL ON THE SAG. RACHELE BELIEVES THAT THE SAG IS DOING SOME THINKING ON HOW BEST TO COPE WITH THOSE PRESSURES BUT SO FAR HAS BEEN UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO CHANGE SIGNALS, IN LARGE PART BECAUSE OF THE POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNAL SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES OF ANY LIBERAL

MOVES CONCERNING NAMIBIA.

7. RACHELE NOTES THAT, SO FAR AS IS KNOWN, THE DE FACTO ACCORD BETWEEN VORSTER, KAUNDA, LISBON AND AT LEAST SOME ELEMENTS OF THE AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, PLUS PERHAPS SMITH HIMSELF, RUNS ONLY THROUGH THE RHODESIAN AND EX-PORTUGUESE AREAS. IF VORSTER BELIEVES THAT ACCORD MAY BUY HIM TIME IN NAMIBIA, HE MAY BE RIGHT. IF, HOWEVER, HE BELIEVES IT CAN BE PARLAYED INTO LONG-TERM AFRICAN ACCEPTANCE OF PRESENT SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES IN NAMIBIA, HE DELUDES HIMSELF. VOLPE

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